



State of Vermont
Vermont Department of Education
120 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

To: Vermont School Administrators

From: Gail Taylor, Director of Research, Standards and Assessment

Subj: School Improvement Grant (SIG) Waiver Public Comment Request

Date: January 26, 2010

As part of Vermont's application for a School Improvement Grant (SIG) from the U.S. Department of Education, the department must submit requests for specific waivers allowed in regards to the use of the SIG funds.

SIG funds will be available to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) based on an application to the Vermont Department of Education to serve Title I identified schools and secondary schools that are eligible for but not receiving Title I funds. They will be distributed in a priority order based on a required ranking of the eligible schools on four indicators: achievement of all students on NECAP mathematics and NECAP reading and the growth of student achievement for all students on NECAP reading and NECAP mathematics.

These priority schools are being referred to nationally as "the persistently lowest-achieving schools." The actual achievement of schools labeled similarly varies from state to state. However, Vermont was required to identify five percent or five schools in each category, whichever was greater. We had to identify five schools.

Superintendents of any of the "persistently lowest-achieving schools", either Title I identified schools (Tier I) or Title I eligible secondary schools (Tier II), have been notified. All other identified Title I schools are considered Tier III. Priority is given to Tier I and Tier II schools for funding, but they are also the schools that must implement one of the four models outlined in the application: Closure; Restart; Turnaround; and Transformative.

Vermont intends to apply for a waiver to extend the availability of school improvement funds for the SEA and all of its participating LEAs to September 30, 2013. If we did not request this waiver, the funds would only be available until September 30, 2011. Based on LEA applications some schools may be prepared to spend their funds more quickly than others, but it makes sense to have the funds available as long as possible.

If you have any comments on this waiver, please send them to gail.taylor@state.vt.us by February 3, 2010 as we must submit them with the application for the funds by the following week.